

**CLERK'S SUMMARY OF AGENDA ACTION  
AND OFFICIAL MINUTES  
GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE TASK FORCE  
APRIL 25, 2005**

The Governmental Structure Task Force convened in the County Commission Chambers on the second floor of the Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 N.W. First Street, Miami, Florida, at 2:00 p.m. on April 25, 2005; there being present upon roll call, Chairman Dennis Moss, Commissioners Rebeca Sosa, Natacha Seijas, and Sally Heyman; Assistant County Attorney Abigail Price-Williams; Director, Office of Strategic Business Management, Jennifer Glazer-Moon; and Deputy Clerk Jill Thornton.

**I. Introduction and Welcome**

Chairman Moss called the Task Force meeting to order at 2:15 p.m. and introduced Mr. Merrett Stierheim, noting he was former Miami-Dade County Manager on two occasions. Commission Moss indicated Mr. Stierheim could offer a unique perspective on the subject of council-manager form of government.

**II. An Overview on the Council-Manager Form of Government  
by Merrett Stierheim**

Mr. Merrett Stierheim, former Miami-Dade County Manager, presented an overview of the Council-Manager form of government, noting the following:

- That it had been in existence for almost 100 years, initially beginning in Staunton, Virginia and emerging from a progressive reform movement to end cronyism, nepotism, mismanagement into one of the most popular forms of local government today.
- That it was modeled after the corporate structure where stockholders owned corporations, elected Boards of Directors and those Boards selected presidents. Citizens owned public assets, elected Board of Commissioners and that Board selected a manager.
- That County Managers, similar to corporate presidents, must be qualified to manage a complex organization; be professionally trained; and possess skills, experience, education, integrity and other qualities that are inherently necessary for the position.
- That County Managers carry out policies of the elected officials like corporation presidents carry out the policies of the Board of Directors.
- That County Managers belong to the International City and County Management Association (ICMA) and are bound to a Code of Ethics.

Mr. Stierheim noted more than half of the 40 US cities under Council-Manager form of government received AAA ratings from Moody and Standards & Poor's. He further noted the Council-Manager form of government currently existed in Phoenix, Arizona and Austin, Texas, which were the top two cities of 35 US cities with the largest revenues pursuant to a governmental performance project conducted by Governing Magazine and Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. He also noted Council-Manager form of

government existed in 63% of US Cities with populations exceeding 25,000 and that since 1984, the number of Council-Manager forms of government in the USA had increased from 2,290 to 3,452 or approximately 50%.

Upon conclusion of the foregoing, Mr. Stierheim noted editorial writings' that support Strong Mayoral form of government without giving consideration to the benefits and popularity of the Council-Manager form of government. He stated it was his professional opinion that Miami-Dade County should preserve the Council Manager form of government and the professionalism, integrity, accountability and independence of the manager.

Following further comments by Mr. Stierheim in support of the Council-Manager form of government, Chairman Moss opened the floor for members of the Board to ask questions.

Commissioner Heyman noted she had asked at the last meeting, for a comparison of governmental structures of large, diverse cities/counties and whether these cities/counties were represented by one person or a full commission body.

Mr. Stierheim stated the question was difficult to respond to without a comparative analysis of cities/counties because each was different in trends and diversity. He suggested the board review a Model City Charter published by the National Civic League to compare those differences. He stated he felt Miami-Dade County could not be compared with Chicago or New York because Miami-Dade County was young and the most diverse county in America, which in itself, presented many challenges. Mr. Stierheim noted he had mixed feelings about single-member districts, but one of the benefits of single-member districts was fair representation.

Commissioner Heyman expressed concern for consolidating power to the point of exclusion and concern for lack of administrative skills in a governing body.

Mr. Stierheim voiced concerns regarding department heads being appointed by the Mayor. He suggested that if a politically elected official was given total power to appoint department head, the selection process would be biased. Mr. Stierheim also noted the characteristics of a strong mayor should be leadership, statesmanship, competency, integrity and non-partisan.

Commissioner Heyman stated she supported the way Mr. Stierheim qualified the role of mayor as a policy developer, and the structure and flexibility in the council-manager form of government.

Mr. Stierheim explained that whether or not a mayoral leadership was strong or weak depended upon the individual elected, and that individual may or may not be a leader for innovation and positive change.

Commissioner Seijas stated she was committed to maintaining the effectiveness and efficiency of Miami-Dade County's government, particularly the procurement process. She thanked Mr. Stierheim for all his advice and support.

Commissioner Seijas asked staff to provide a list of the 40 cities that had received an outstanding rating from Moody and Standard & Poor's, as mentioned by Mr. Stierheim. She also requested a

list of all large cities and counties currently or formerly under Council-Manager form of government and the reasons for success or failure.

Mr. Stierheim mentioned some large cities and counties currently under Council-Manager form of government for the record.

Chairman Moss pointed out that a number of cities with Strong Mayor form of government had decreased drastically since 1984.

Commissioner Sosa noted the need for a balance of power in the role of the County Commission and the Mayor. She asked that Commissioner Seijas' request for a comparison of large cities include a comparison of power and authority granted to mayors without identifying them by name, including their power to hire/fire department directors, to guide a legislative body, to waive competitive bids, and to remove powers for procurement from the commission. She asked Mr. Stierheim if he had ever fired an employee without repercussion during his tenure as County Manager.

Responding to Commissioner Sosa's question, Mr. Stierheim noted Miami-Dade County's Charter delegated the authority to remove an exempt service employee by the County Manager, but he rarely used that power. Mr. Stierheim stated this power should be used professionally, not politically. He noted the civil court was the only due process available for exempt employees.

### **III. Public Communications and Input**

#### **1. Website**

Ms. Corinne Brody, Special Assistant for Strategic Management Initiatives, noted the Task Force Website for public communication and input was currently under development and should be operating by the end of the week.

#### **2. Outreach options and venues**

Ms. Hilda Fernandez, Director, Department of Communications, noted the Department of Communications was tasked with developing a public information plan; advertising community public hearings and the government structural analysis report; and identifying available venues within the community for public hearings.

Ms. Fernandez noted two locations readily available for live broadcast of public meetings at no additional cost were the Commission Chambers and Miami-Dade Fire Headquarters. She further noted three additional locations with live broadcast capacity but only within their jurisdiction were the City of Coral Gables, the City of Miami and the City of Miami Beach, noting the live broadcast could be extended countywide through contract with Coral Gables for an approximate cost of \$3,600. Ms. Fernandez stated there were alternative locations not configured for television broadcast but could be made TV ready for a cost of approximately \$11,000 per meeting, noting the difference in cost for live broadcast vs. taping was relatively negligible.

Regarding the Public Hearing campaign, Ms. Fernandez noted there were several options for advertising public hearings. She stated that existing internal resources such as Miami-Dade TV, posting signage, Task Force website, and the external County Newsletter could be used with little expense. She also stated other potential alternatives to be explored were Transit advertising, paid public service announcements and mainstream periodical publications, noting a 1/4 page ad using all available periodicals would cost approximately \$44,000 and a 1/2 page ad would cost approximately \$77,000. She also noted an additional option was to schedule Task Force Chair and members as guest speakers at community meetings, events or public service shows to encourage the public to participate in the process.

Ms. Fernandez noted many of the mentioned venues available to advertise public hearings were also available to advertise the availability of the report once it was compiled. She noted the final report would be posted on line and provided through the Answer Center with one common number for people to call and request a copy. She stated the extent in which the board wished to publicize the public hearings and final report beyond the use of internal resources was a product of the available budget and stated staff would be happy to work with the recommendations made by the task force.

Commissioner Seijas suggested another option would be to hold public meetings in venues not televised. She suggested that all task force members and commissioners be invited to make public appearances at municipal council meetings. Commissioner Seijas also asked if anything precluded the county from advertising the public hearing schedule on pay stubs of Miami-Dade County employees and Jackson Memorial Hospital employees.

Ms. Fernandez noted there was limited space to print information on Miami-Dade County employee pay stubs but the website could be printed on the pay stub for individuals to access the full schedule of the public hearings.

In response to Commissioner Seijas' question regarding the newsletter publishing date and the cost of radio time, Ms. Fernandez stated the expected date for publishing the newsletter was June 24, 2005 and the newsletter could include information regarding the expected issue date of the final report. Ms. Fernandez noted the cost associated with radio advertising would depend on the number of spots purchased, the frequencies and the time of day.

Chairman Moss asked for an effective proposed plan for advertising public hearings and disseminating information about the meetings of the Governmental Structure Task Force.

Commissioner Sosa suggested a flyer be developed to announce the public hearing dates and to include it with the paychecks of Miami-Dade County employees. She noted the commissioners represent many municipalities and could duplicate the flyers to distribute within their districts.

Ms. Fernandez assured the task force that staff would obtain dates of all municipal council meetings and would speak with representatives from the Department of Public Health Trust to confirm if they would be able to add a message on paycheck stubs regarding the public hearing schedules. She also noted staff would develop specific recommendations regarding what they believed to be the most effective way to notice public hearing dates and disseminate information to the public to encourage public participation and that they would be looking into the

development of municipal flyers that could be distributed through the mechanisms of the districts.

#### **IV. Update on Survey Process**

Ms. Corinne Brody provided a list of additional jurisdictions that were being surveyed regarding effective criteria for governmental structure and procurement. She noted the Office of Strategic Business Management was coordinating this survey and had anticipated providing the results at the next task force meeting.

Commissioner Heyman read into the record excerpts from a final report of the Miami-Dade County Grand Jury filed January 19, 2000. She expressed concern for the public's lack of understanding of the procurement process and noted the issue presented in the Grand Jury's report was the selection process itself and recommendations for safeguards of accountability, checks and balances, transparency and a manager preserving the cone of silence.

Commissioner Heyman asked that copies of the Grand Jury's final report entitled "Inquiry Regarding the Miami-Dade County Contract Process: A call for the restoration of fiscal trust and confidence spring term A.D. 1999, filed January 19, 2000" be provided to members of the commission and that a summation of this report, highlighting pages 36-40, be disseminated.

Commissioner Seijas asked that the survey entitled "Survey of Additional Jurisdiction for Governmental Structure/Effective Criteria" be refined to include more cities with weak mayors so that weak vs. strong mayors was more balanced, and that there be more detailed comments.

Ms. Brody stated staff would be ready for the next meeting.

Commissioner Heyman noted for the record that starting May 9, 2005, she would be teaching until 1:40 pm and would like to participate in the task force meetings that start at 2:00 pm.

Chairman Moss stated the task force would work around her schedule.

#### **V. Open Discussion – Not considered**

#### **IV. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before them, the Governmental Structure Task Force meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.



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Commissioner Dennis C. Moss, Chairman